ABOUT THE TASK FORCE...

The Texas Interagency Task Force on Deafblindness consists of representatives from parent/consumer groups and state agencies. It was created in February 1979 to encourage quality services to Texans who are deafblind. The mission of the Task Force is to share information and solve problems in order to develop and enhance the supports and services available to Texans who are deafblind, while fostering a sense of community among people who have an involvement with deafblindness.

The Task Force meets quarterly and is hosted on a rotating basis by agency representatives.

DBMAT

The Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas (DBMAT) was formed by parents and professionals who have been meeting together on an annual basis since 1973 for education, training, and the sharing of common concerns, challenges and support.

DBMAT's mission is to promote and improve the quality of life for all Texans who are deaf-blind multihandicapped, blind-multi-handicapped or deaf-multi-handicapped. It was chartered by the State of Texas in 1976 as a non-profit organization.

DBMAT supports the establishment of education, rehabilitation, vocational and independent living opportunities; provides parental/sibling education and understanding of the family member's abilities/disabilities; offers resource information and referral to families and professionals; encourages support among parents and promotes awareness of special needs
surrounding these unique handicapping conditions.

DBMAT conducts an annual fall conference and workshop for families and professionals, publishes a tri-annual newsletter, In Touch, and distributes an informational brochure. DBMAT has 3 ongoing Work Groups in place (Legislative, Conference & Fund-Raising) that provide opportunities for discussion and action planning throughout the state.

A special project of DBMAT is “Positive Connections.” Regional Coordinators offer information and referral to families in their area, link families to each other, help establish parent-professional networks and assist the Texas Deafblind Project with the State Census for Deafblind. DBMAT is also a charter member of the National Family Association for Deaf-Blind.


DADS

The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) operates a program that helps people who have deaf-blindness with multiple disabilities become more independent. The Deaf Blind with Multiple Disabilities (DBMD) program includes three parts:

- a DBMD Medicaid Waiver program, Family Training and Respite, and an Outdoor Camping Experience.

  **DBMD Medicaid Waiver:** This waiver provides home and community-based services to eligible individuals who have deaf-blindness, with a third disability. This program is a cost-effective alternative to institutional care. People can receive support in their own home, or their parent’s or guardian’s home, or 24 hour assistance in an assisted living setting (up to 6 people) or a shared apartment setting (up to 3 people). DBMD waiver services may include habilitation, respite, chore services, intervener, therapies, nursing, dietary, behavior support services, orientation and mobility, supported employment, employment assistance, dental services, adaptive aids, and home modifications. A case manager trained in deaf-blindness assists the person and their family to determine appropriate supports, and the consumer directed service (CDS) option allows the person or their representative to self direct habilitation, intervener and respite services if they choose. Because there is limited funding, people who want to receive services have their names placed on an interest list and are offered enrollment in the DBMD Medicaid Waiver on a first-come, first-served basis, as funds are allocated.

  **Family Training:** – annual family conference for parents, co-sponsored by the Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas (DBMAT).
Respite is provided for caregivers of people who have deaf-blindness and their siblings during the conference. Financial support is available for transportation.

Camping Program: – specialized summer camp with skills training and communication supports for people who have deaf-blindness. This five-day camp experience is available to individuals who have deaf-blindness with multiple disabilities and are over the age of five.

DADS also provides a wide range of other community and institutional services for people who are aging and people with disabilities. Visit the website at <www.dads.state.tx.us> for more information about other services available.

To request DBMD Medicaid waiver services, contact DADS at 1-877-438-5658 and ask for the Deaf-Blind with Multiple Disabilities Medicaid Waiver Interest List. To request Family Training or Outdoor Camping Experience services, contact the DBMD Program Specialist at 512-438-2622 (voice or TTY) or 1-877-438-5658 or by mail at: Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services; DBMD Program MC W-521; P.O. Box 149030; Austin, TX 78714-9030

The Department contracts with 39 Mental Retardation Authorities (MRAs) to provide a variety of services throughout the state to people with intellectual disabilities and Pervasive Developmental Disabilities including autism. MRAs serve as the single point of access for publicly funded intellectual disabilities services in the state. They are responsible for management of interest lists and providing enrollment services for Home and Community based services (HCS), the Texas Home Living Program (TxHmL) services. MRAs also provide support in locating community ICF/MR facilities and facilitating admission to State Supported Living Centers (SSLCs) for eligible individuals. Services provided through the Mental Retardation Authorities include service coordination, respite, day habilitation, community support services, specialized therapies and supported employment services. For information on the MRA serving a particular county check the following: www.dads.state.tx.us/contact/combined.cfm

DADS also operates State Supported Living Centers (SSLCs). SSLCs provide direct services and supports to individuals with intellectual disabilities admitted to the twelve SSLC campuses and one state center. The SSLCs are located in Abilene, Austin, Brenham, Corpus Christi, Denton, El Paso, Lubbock, Lufkin, Mexia, Richmond, San Angelo and San Antonio. Rio Grande state center also provides campus-based services to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Each center is certified as an Intermediate Care Facility for Persons with Mental Retardation (ICF/MR), a Medicaid-funded federal/state service. Approximately 60 percent of the operating funds for the facilities are received from the federal government.
and 40 percent are provided through State General Revenue or third-party revenue sources.

The Rio Grande State Center is operated by the Department of State Health Services (DSHS). The Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) has contracted with DSHS to continue to provide services to persons with intellectual disabilities.

State schools and centers provide 24-hour residential services, comprehensive behavioral treatment services and health care services including physician services, nursing services and dental services. Other services include skills training, occupational, physical and speech therapies, vocational programs, and services to maintain connections between residents and their families/natural support systems.

Residential services in a SSLC or the Rio Grande Center are intended to serve individuals with severe or profound intellectual disabilities and those individuals with intellectual disabilities who are medically fragile or who have behavioral problems.


DARS / DBS

The Division for Blind Services (DBS) is part of the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). DBS serves over 375 Texans of all ages who are deafblind. Services include, but are not limited to adaptive skills training, career guidance, technology training, and employment assistance. Training for professionals is also available on a limited basis. The Deafblind Services department serves as the HKNC affiliate for the state of Texas so collaborates closely with them as they do with other service providers.

DBS has a Community Based Apartment Program which provides assistance to individuals who are deafblind and active in the work force. An onsite DBS office provides training and employment assistance to residents. The Apartment’s Outreach Program allows staff to provide services to consumers in the Austin area.

For children, the DBS has specialists who consult with families and teachers in the home and in the classroom. The Transition Program provides educational and career guidance for adolescents and young adults. The staff of the Independent Living Program provides services for adults who are not interested in employment.

For more information about DBS, you may contact Task Force Representatives Brad Carlson or Rachel Simpson at (512) 377-0588 (voice/TTY); or at 1-800-628-5115. The DBS Deafblind Services webpage is <www.dars.state.tx.us/dbs/deafblind.shtml>.
DARS / DHHS

The DARS, Division for Rehabilitative Services, Office for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) works in partnership with people who are deaf or hard of hearing to eliminate societal and communication barriers to improve equal access for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. DHHS advocates for people of all ages who are deaf or hard of hearing to enable them to express their freedoms, participate in society to their individual potential, and reduce their isolation regardless of location, socioeconomic status, or degree of disability.

DHHS Last Resort Communication Services may be provided for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing to enable access to essential services and community participation. These services are available as a last resort only when the Americans with Disabilities Act and other access mandates are not applicable. The services offered include sign language, oral interpreters and real-time captioning. Individuals who are deaf-blind are eligible to receive these services, as are all Texans who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Other services offered through DHHS contracts include the Senior Citizens Program, Camp Sign, Interpreter Outreach and Training, Hard of Hearing Services, the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI), Deafness and Hearing Loss Resources Specialist Programs, and Certification of Deafness known as Tuition Waiver. The Specialized Telecommunications Assistance Program (STAP) provides financial assistance to individuals who are deafblind to purchase specialized equipment for access to telephone services.

For more information about DHHS check out the website at <www.dars.state.tx.us/dhhs>, or contact Task Force Representative Ann Horn, Direct Services Program Specialist, in Austin at (512) 410-1387 videophone/VRS. For those who do not have videophone, one can call 866-568-5176.

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DSHS

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) vision statement says "We commit, through personal and organizational excellence, to be an agent of change dedicated to achieving a healthier Texas." Programs that relate to the deaf and hard-of-hearing include two programs in Audiology Services and the Vision and Hearing Screening program. The Program for Amplification for Children of Texas (PACT) serves children ages birth through twenty years who are hearing impaired or deaf, and who qualify financially for the program. The Newborn Hearing Screening Program assists and monitors birth facilities that have established programs to screen all newborns for hearing loss at birth. The
Vision and Hearing Screening program provides training for hearing and vision screeners who screen children from ages four through twenty years.

The Audiometric Laboratory registers and monitors the people and the equipment used to test hearing, and has some audiometers which it loans to facilities. For further information about DSHS, you may access program information on the DSHS website: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/vhs> and <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/audio>.

DARS ECI

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) is a coordinated system of services available in every Texas County for children, birth to age three, with disabilities or delays. ECI is a Division of the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), and services are provided by 58 local agencies and organizations across Texas. ECI supports families to help their children reach their potential through developmental services. State and Federally funded through IDEA Part C, ECI provides screenings, comprehensive evaluations at no cost to families, and asks families who can afford to do so to share in the cost of ongoing services through the Family Cost Share. Families of children who qualify for auditory or vision services are exempt from the Family Cost Share.

ECI emphasizes the essential role of the family in facilitating the growth and development of the child. Family-centered services are provided within the context of the family, and are responsive to family concerns and priorities. ECI teams work in partnership with families, to enable families to use resources to meet their needs. An interdisciplinary team of at least two professionals and the family develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) to address each child’s unique needs. The IFSP is written to reflect the concerns identified by the family, identify their child’s strengths and needs, and outline strategies for interventions. It should reflect the family’s priorities, concerns, and dreams for their child.

For infants and toddlers who are deafblind, ECI collaborates with the local education agency and/or the Regional Day School Program for the Deaf to provide specialized services for hearing and vision. Services are provided in the family’s home and community settings. Services are tailored to meet each child and family’s individualized needs, and may include:

- assistive technology
- audiology
- early identification, screening and assessment
- family counseling
- family education
- medical services (diagnostic or evaluation services used to determine eligibility)
• nursing services
• nutrition services
• occupational therapy
• physical therapy
• psychological services
• service coordination
• social work services
• speech-language therapy
• transportation
• vision services

If you have questions or concerns, or to make a referral to ECI, please call 1-800-250-2246. Website: <www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis>.

HKNC

The Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) offers a model comprehensive rehabilitation program at their center in New York. Regional Representatives refer people who are deaf-blind for rehabilitation training to the national center. Following several months of evaluation and training, HKNC students are assisted in relocation to their home communities. HKNC also provides a technical assistance program to persons who are deaf-blind and their family members. Short-term training in technology and limited summer programming for students is available. HKNC provides: case finding and maintenance of a national registry; evaluation, counseling, rehabilitation training; relocation and placement assistance for HKNC students; community education; professional training; advocacy and other related services.

HKNC supports a network of affiliated agencies to encourage the development of specialized services and interagency collaboration The center also supports the National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB), which advances services to families. The National Consortium on Deafblindness (NCDB) is a grant project, a collaborative effort by HKNC, Perkins School for the Blind, and Western Oregon University which provides personnel training, information, technical assistance, and consultations to assist with the development of a number of services for deaf-blind people of educational and transition age, as well as their families. Another program, the Older Adult Program (OAP), provides technical assistance, training, and resource materials related to services for older adults who are deaf-blind. HKNC publishes an E-news newsletter which anyone can sign up for by contacting the regional office. Many of HKNC’s services and programs are carried out in collaboration with state agencies. HKNC’s website is <www.hknc.org>.

For more information you can reach C.C. Davis (Regional Representative) in Dallas at (972) 490-9677. (Email: cc.davis@hknc.org)
The Texas Education Agency ensures that students who are deafblind receive a free and appropriate education according to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and state law. Eligible students include infants and toddlers and young adults up to age 22. Services for each student over three years of age are provided by local school districts according to an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This plan is developed by the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee. The committee is made up of the parents and district staff including teachers of the deaf and teachers of students with visual impairments. The plan may have goals in skill areas such as dressing, feeding, communication and moving in the environment, as well as traditional academic skills. Examples of services outlined in the plan include classroom instruction, adaptive technology, orientation and mobility, low vision evaluations, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and physical therapy. The plan will vary according to the individual needs of each student.

For infants and toddlers (birth to three), school districts collaborate with the Early Childhood Education (ECI) programs to develop individualized family service plans (IFSP). These are developed by an IFSP team which includes the parent, ECI staff, a teacher of the deaf, often from the Regional Day School Program for the Deaf, and a teacher of students with visual impairments.

By age 16, each student will have a transition plan in place to help them make a smooth transition from education services to adult services when they leave the school system.

The Texas Education Agency supports a network of deafblind specialists, located at each of the 20 regional education service centers, who are available to provide training and support to parents and districts.

The Texas Education Agency also administers the Texas Deafblind Project, a federally funded grant through IDEA. One of the grant activities is to conduct an annual census of students who are deafblind. In addition, the grant funds a team of highly skilled experts in the field of deafblindness to provide technical assistance to the regional deafblind specialists, parents and school district staff who have students with deafblindness. Examples of assistance include onsite consultations, local and statewide workshops and training opportunities, parent activities, as well as an outstanding newsletter, SEE/HEAR. Both the census and the technical assistance are provided by the Deafblind Outreach Program at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

For additional information, you may contact Task Force Representative Brent Pitt in Austin at (512) 463-9414, or visit the link to the Texas
TSD

Texas School for the Deaf, located in Austin, is the oldest continuously operating public funded school in Texas. Since 1857, over 10,000 students have graced the halls of TSD. In addition to educating students who are deaf and hard of hearing, TSD now serves as a resource center on deafness for students, parents, professionals and others throughout the state. Overlooking the hill country, the state of the art campus facilities cover 67 scenic acres across the river from downtown Austin. It is one of the most recognized, most beautiful schools in all of Texas.

It is our educational excellence, our belief in a culture and community that embraces deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing individuals alike, and our commitment to helping each child reach his or her potential that drives our mission to provide an environment where deaf and hard of hearing children can learn, grow, and belong. We believe in providing an exemplary education and student life program that fosters learning in a visually accessible, safe and positive environment.

In addition to its mission of serving the students and families of Texas School for the Deaf, our agency has a second mission of serving all of the Lone Star state through outreach programs. Though the entire TSD campus, programs and staff are considered statewide resources, one department, the Educational Resource Center on Deafness, spearheads these efforts. Information/referral, resources, workshops, summer programs, distance learning, and interpreter training are some of the services we provide for deaf and hard of hearing children, their families, and professional service providers.

For additional information, contact Task Force representative Peggy Miller in Austin at (512) 462-5223, e-mail peggy.miller@tsd.state.tx.us, or you can visit the TSD website at <www.tsd.state.tx.us>.

TSBVI

Children and youth (ages 0-22) who are deafblind are served by the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) in two ways: campus-based instructional programs located in Austin; and the Texas Deafblind Project, that provides outreach training and information to families, school districts, and related agencies serving young people with deafblindness on a local level throughout the state.

On-campus instructional programs at TSBVI are designed flexibly in order to meet the individual needs of a variety of students. The Comprehensive Program is an educational
placement during the regular school year from August through May. Special Programs are short-term targeted learning experiences, lasting 1-6 weeks during the summer, and during other selected weeks or weekends throughout the year. All instruction is especially designed to educate visually impaired children, including students who are deafblind. Programming for deafblind students includes individual and group instruction in areas such as communication, social and cognitive development, orientation and mobility, functional living skills, work skills and recreation/leisure skills. Instruction includes functional activities in community-based settings. The school works closely with local school districts and families to provide services based on an intensive and coordinated team approach. Program staff includes teachers, therapists, interveners, residential instructors, and other professionals.

Texas Deafblind Outreach serves as a resource for families and professionals involved with students who are deafblind. The program provides information and training opportunities to help local service providers and families better meet the unique needs of all children with deafblindness within Texas communities. Outreach services are available statewide, and are provided in coordination with related agencies and service providers.

Texas Deafblind Outreach has four major training components:

INSITE – a training model designed for staff working with families who have children birth to 5 years of age with sensory impairments and other handicapping conditions.

Teacher Training – a statewide resource for local school districts and other agencies providing direct services to students, 6 to 21 years old, who are deafblind.

Transition Planning – a training and information resource for families, schools, and service agencies involved with students who are deafblind, as they plan the move from school to adult life in the community.

Family Training – a statewide resource designed to provide information, training, and support to families of children with deafblindness, including in-depth Family Leadership Training.

Texas Deafblind Outreach also sponsors local and statewide workshops, including the biennial Texas Symposium on Deafblindness. Outreach develops and distributes various training materials, and in coordination with DARS-DBS, a quarterly publication, TX SenseAbilities, in both English and Spanish.

For more information, you can contact Task Force representatives Kim Conlin (on-campus programs) at (512) 206-9351, or David Wiley (Outreach) at (512) 206-9219. Visit the TSBVI web site at <www.tsbvi.edu>.

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**USHER SYNDROME SUPPORT GROUP OF TEXAS**

The Usher Syndrome Support Group of Texas (founded and based in Austin) is a group of individuals with Usher Syndrome Type I, II and III. Two annual statewide meetings allow members and their families from across the state of Texas to come together for mutual support and fellowship and to acquire new information about research and resources. Our largest gathering takes place annually in Austin, usually at the end of National Deafblind Awareness Week in June. Austin meetings occur on a quarterly basis and are social in nature (pizza parties, eating out at a new restaurant, etc.). Our Christmas party for everyone traditionally happens on the first Saturday in the month of December. Plans for future regional chapters of this support group (Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio areas) are being discussed. If you are interested in additional information about our Usher Syndrome Support Group and/or our exclusive Usher Chat List of Texas, please feel free to call our Facilitator, Kris Cue’ at 512-251-2550 or e-mail her at <kcue@sbcglobal.net>.

**DEAF-BLIND SERVICE CENTER OF AUSTIN**

The Deaf-Blind Service Center of Austin is a new venture being developed to serve the deafblind community in the Austin area and its vicinity. It is being modeled after the established and very successful Deaf-Blind Service Center of Seattle, Washington and customized to serve the needs of the deafblind community in Texas. The Mission Statement of the DBSC of Austin is: "The Deaf-Blind Service Center of Austin is committed to assisting people who are deafblind in reaching and maintaining their highest possible quality of life and level of independence.". DBSC of Austin was incorporated by the Texas Secretary of State's office in January of 2006 and achieved its 501c3 tax exemption status with IRS in July of 2007. Originally created to satisfy development requirements of the National SSP Pilot Project, the DBSC of Austin is now moving forward under the mentorship of Jelica Nuccio, Executive Director of Seattle's DBSC. The immediate goal of DBSC of Austin is to develop and implement a successful Support Service Provider (SSP) Program for the deafblind community in Austin.

The renowned SSP Program is the flagship of services offered by the DBSC of Seattle and is very highly respected by members of the deafblind community of our nation. Secondary goals of the DBSC of Austin are to
provide information and referral to appropriate agencies and services that serve the deafblind community as well as to provide Community Awareness of deafblindness and SSP's.

Board meetings of the DBSC of Austin are held the second Tuesday of every month from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. The public is welcomed at board meetings! We invite all persons interested in 1) the development and strategic planning of Austin's DBSC, 2) serving on and/or offering assistance on committees (Brochure, Finance, Fundraising, Grant Writing, State Funding and Education, Town Hall Meeting Planning, Website), or 3) information regarding providing interpreter services or receiving training on how to be an SSP. If interested, please contact Kris Cue', P.O. Box 9463, Austin, Texas 78766, phone 512-251-2550 (Voice) or e-mail at kcue@sbcglobal.net. Our website (a work in progress!) is www.austindbsc.org.

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Deaf Blind Awareness Week

Deaf-Blind Awareness Week is celebrated the entire month of June. Please help us in making the public aware of the needs and abilities of people who are deafblind. For information on this year’s activities, and ideas for how you can help, please contact C.C. Davis with the Helen Keller National Center (see contact information at the end of this publication).
Membership
Texas Interagency Task Force on Deafblindness

Kris Cué - Consumer
Facilitator, Usher Syndrome Support Group of Texas
Chairperson, DBSC of Austin
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Jackie Souhrada (512) 377-0575
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DARS-DRS Office for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS)
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(512) 407-3251 (TTY)
FAX #: (512) 407-3299
Sorenson VideoPhone 512-410-1387; Video Relay: 866-568-5176
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Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)
1100 West 49th Street
Austin, TX 78756-3199

Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS)
P.O. Box 149030, MCW-521
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Texas School for the Deaf
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Texas Education Agency (TEA)
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(512) 475-3540 (TTY)
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DARS Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)
4900 N. Lamar
Austin, TX 78751-2399

Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI)/On Campus Programs
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Email: kimconlin@tsbvi.edu

Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI)/Texas Deafblind Outreach
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Attn: David Wiley (512) 206-9219 (V)
Attn: Holly Cooper (512) 206-9217
Attn: Cyral Miller (512) 206-9242
(512) 206-9188 (TTY)
FAX #: (512) 206-9320
Email: davidwiley@tsbvi.edu
hollycooper@tsbvi.edu
cyralmiller@tsbvi.edu

Health and Human Services Commission
P.O. Box 85200, MC H-370
Austin, TX 78708
Attn: Cindy Eilertson
(512) 491-1305 (V)
Fax #: (512) 491-1953
cynthia.eilertson@hhsc.state.tx.us
CALENDAR

Regularly scheduled dates to remember:

Fall/October  DBMAT Family Conference. Contact:  <pwelch@usaonline.net>
Quarterly Texas Deaf-Blind Association meetings
Fall      Texas Charger’s Conference.
          Contact:  <dacspringer@austin.rr.com>
Quarterly Austin area meeting of Usher Syndrome support group.
          Contact:  <kcue@sbcglobal.net>
Quarterly Texas Interagency Task Force, 2nd Thursday of February, May, Sept, November.
Annually/June Statewide Gathering for National Deafblind Awareness Week Celebration, Austin, Texas. Contact:  <kcue@sbcglobal.net>
Biennial/Feb Texas Symposium on Deafblindness

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THESE EVENTS, PLEASE CALL 512-206-9219 or 972-490-9677
The 2009 version can be found at http://www.nationaldb.org/documents/Collaboration2009.doc